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In Memoriam: Mr. Andrew "Andy" Jason Schiro

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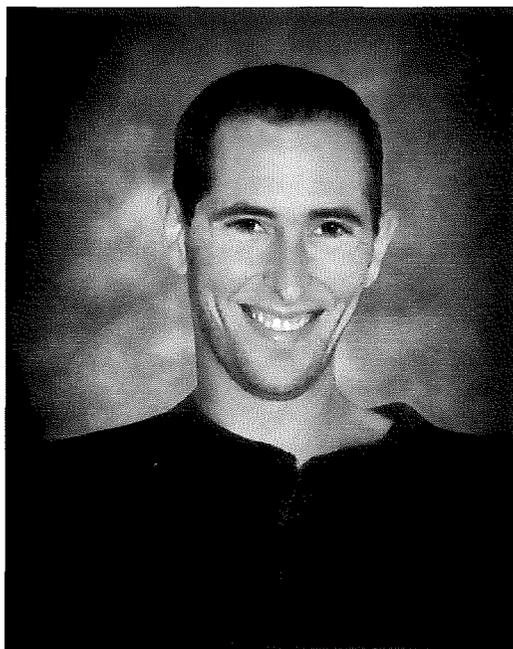
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IN MEMORIAM

MR. ANDREW (“ANDY”) JASON SCHIRO

1970–2007



Andrew (“Andy”) Jason Schiro passed away on 14 April 2007 at age 36, after a courageous and lengthy battle with sarcoma (a form of cancer). Andy’s life was much too short, but he still had an amazing impact on those that knew and were inspired by him. Andy had a vitality and passion for life, and a natural generosity that is rare.

Andy was born in Tampa, Florida, on 8 September 1970 and spent his formative years in Wilmington, Delaware; Mobile, Alabama; Galveston, Texas; and Lawrence, Kansas. Andy returned to the Tampa Bay area in 2001 to be near his extended family.

Andy’s interest in the marine environment was no doubt spurred by living near the ocean. While still in high school, Andy was lured by rehabilitation efforts of stranded whales and dolphins and began volunteering with the TMMSN, and was then briefly hired by the NMFS to assist with the retrieval and necropsy of both marine mammals and sea turtles. Andy participated in the GulfCet shipboard line-transect surveys

(a series of large-scale marine mammal surveys in the offshore Gulf of Mexico) as an observer and assisted with a comprehensive review of historic cetacean stranding and sighting records for the Gulf of Mexico. He also assisted with radiotracking of Kemp’s ridley sea turtles to determine their movement patterns and their usage of coastal waters, as well as a project to test a new net type to reduce fish and cetacean bycatch common in gillnets traditionally used by sea turtle researchers.

For many years in Galveston, Texas, he worked with numerous organizations, including the Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network (TMMSN), Texas A&M University’s Marine Mammal Research Program (MMRP), the National Marine Fisheries (NMFS), and the American Cetacean Society. Andy’s exuberance for learning and desire to help others is reflected by the numbers of graduate students at the MMRP who relied on his assistance during all aspects of their research, and his frequent dealings with panicked people needing his computer expertise. He also co-authored seven peer-reviewed scientific papers on Gulf of Mexico marine mammals in his short career, without the benefit of a college degree.

Andy also enjoyed teaching people about the marine environment that shaped him. He often assisted at both the Texas A&M Sea Camp and the Elder Hostel to teach coastal ecology to both elementary students and senior citizens. One summer he acted as an academic teaching assistant in Duke University’s Talent Identification Program.

Andy’s wish was to have his ashes scattered in the Gulf of Mexico, which was such an important part of his life and an area he loved and cherished. His ashes will be combined into an artificial reef, so that he will be forever surrounded by the wildlife he loved.

Our hope is that Andy’s spirit will guide us to make this world a better place. When we who knew him think of Andy, we see a positive, smiling guy walking around barefoot...we hope he’s still shoeless. Andy is survived and greatly missed by his parents Janis and Michael Schiro and his many friends and colleagues.

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